4: Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1957 AE9 Monguor AE9

of the members of a college, at the time they enter, have previously received only the training of ordinary lamas, which consists of learning to read and write more or less correctly. Old lamas, as well as young Wendees, from the time they fulfill these two conditions, are allowed to apply for membership if the colleges have an appeal for them. A lama is not compelled to enter any college. If he does, the manner of joining or leaving a college is the same as described for joining or leaving the community of the lamas. Every lama is allowed to remain a member of a college for as long as the appeal of the college persists, and usually he remains a member for the whole of his lifetime.

Each college is an independent unit within the lamasery, having its own wealth and administration, its own temple, administrative buildings, and residence for its Fa-t'ai. The administration of the colleges is built on the pattern of the organization of the community of the lamas, with the same kinds of officials, and enjoying the same kinds of autonomous rights and privileges.

The four colleges are: (1) The College of Philosophy and Metaphysics, (2) The College of Ritual, Magic and Astrology, (3) The College of Medicine, and (4) The College of Sacred Scripture and Monastic Rules.

In Huang-chung at present (1910–1920) nothing more is required from the members of a college than attendance at the ceremonies in its temple and at the instruction given by the Fa-t'ai on a few fixed dates. There are no regular courses with compulsory attendance, no program of studies is required to be completed within a certain number of years, there are no compulsory examinations, and no obligation to take any degree or diploma. No director supervises the studies of the members of the college; studies are a personal matter, depending on the initiative of each individual.

A lama who has some feeling for study, who possesses some money provided by his family, or whose master is willing to spend some money for his education, goes to see a learned lama taking with him some meat, noodles, raisins, sugar, and some money, and prostrates himself, offering the ceremonial scarf and asking the lama to be his teacher. Usually, three or four lamas manage to become pupils of the same master. At fixed times they have to bring presents to the teacher. The study of the book designated by the master starts with committing the text to memory, and recitation before the master. Two or three times a week the master takes time to hear the recitation. Student and master are in no hurry; once in a while the master is too busy to teach, or one of the students is prevented from attending the lesson. The students all engage in domestic duties. Their capacities and fervor for study are not the same. After a few weeks one of them is memorizing the fourth, one the tenth sheet, and so on. After several weeks more, a couple of them have no further desire for study and drop out.

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The master starts with the explanation of the text after the student has finished memorizing it, and so it happens that, after some time, one pupil is studying a second or a third book, while the others are still studying the first one. It is hard to teach pupils who have not received the same educational preparation and who progress at an unequal pace. The lack of elementary schools and high schools compels the master to adapt his teaching to the capacity and enthusiasm of each of the students, and inevitably the study loses its interest for pupil and master.

It is no wonder that very few learned lamas are encountered at present among the lamas of Huang-chung. The Living Buddha Goorong bzan, of the Red Sect, was the only man celebrated for his learning all over the country during the period 1910–1920, and he enjoyed this reputation among lamas of the Yellow Sect as well as the Red Sect. In Kumbum there was also a learned Living Buddha, Chao-hsi, who was said to have given instruction in the lamasery of Galdan in Tibet. In June, 1920, he was invited by the community of lamas of Kumbum to give instruction for ten days, and Kumbum seized this opportunity to invite all the lamas of Huang-chung to attend the ceremony, remembering that each attendant should offer a ceremonial scarf to the preacher, and bring his food with him. Kumbum, however, would offer two butter-teas to the participants each day. I was at Hua-yüan, a branch of Erh-ku-lung, at that time, and the intendant, in order to have his lamas attend the instruction, himself offered to provide them with the food for twelve days; but only 12 among the 58 lamas went to Kumbum.

In 1914 I was told that among the 3,000 lamas of Kumbum, 1,300 were members of the College of Philosophy, 350 of the College of Ritual, Magic and Astrology, 200 each in the College of Medicine and the College of Sacred Scripture and Monastic Rules. All these numbers have to be reduced according to the ratio previously noted for the 3,000 lamas of Kumbum, but the proportion is the same for the members attending the colleges. Thus, among the 3,000 lamas 2,000 or two-thirds were enjoying a higher educational training in the colleges, and they remained members of the colleges for the whole of their lives. This was generally true for all of the colleges of Huang-chung.

The reason for the unusual attendance at the colleges is not that these institutions are centers of higher education, but rather that they provide meals for their members. The richest colleges, able to give the greatest number and the choicest meals, are the best attended, such as the College of Philosophy. Another attraction of this very popular college, teaching the most arduous of all the sciences, is the relaxation provided by the public disputations. The schedule of the meals provided by the various colleges supports these statements:

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even minor Living Buddhas live in luxurious residences, with a private chapel and servants. Admittance to the Living Buddha is very complicated; no one is even allowed to enter the kitchen, at the entrance of which, when the Living Buddha is present, is a high stone, whitewashed and covered with a ceremonial scarf.

The first duty of the intendant is to acquire for his new master two lama teachers of good repute and extensive learning, in order to provide for the education of the pupil. The first lessons consist of training the boy, grooming him for a big throne, to handle the protocol, as one to the manner born. The new pupil, clad in shining garments of embroidered silk, has to learn again and again to proceed with a stately, measured tread to his throne, which is draped with silk of royal yellow; to sit down gracefully, adjusting his clothes decently, and wearing a professional smile. He has to be trained by constant repetition to handle with elegance the stick with tufted end, and with solemnity to touch with it the heads of adoring pilgrims, nodding his head at the same time and smiling with calmness and serenity.

An old master told me that it takes weeks and weeks before a pupil sits well in the saddle, and that after months and months the exercises always have to be repeated, because, he said, the dignity of the pupil and the repute of the master are involved. At the same time, he said, the teacher has to instill in the pupil the idea of the eminence of his state in life, to make him conscious that the people adore him and that he really can procure the salvation of all beings. He has to explain his illustrious pedigree in order to enhance in him the sense of his dignity.[25]

No wonder that travelers meeting Living Buddhas, particularly young Living Buddhas, are impressed by the serious omnipotent look on their faces. It is a common saying that all Orientals are born actors, and the joke is well known, "Dress a beggar with the clothes of a governor of a province, and he will immediately play his role to the peak of perfection." Living Buddhas, however, receive an intensive training.

The little Living Buddha then starts reading and writing, memorizing texts and repeating them before his masters, who inflict corporal punishment when he fails to measure up to their expectations. The master, after punishing the pupil, kneels before him and apologizes for having been compelled to mete out punishment to so eminent a Living Buddha. It would seem that Living Buddhas, like ordinary lamas, are not very interested in poring over books and racking their brains over philosophical problems. The last T'u-kuan, born in 1894, had two masters, one from Erh-ku-lung and one sent by his friend the Living Buddha of Labrang. The master from Labrang, after some years, gave up all hope of making a learned man of his pupil, and packed

[25] Schuyler Cammann, *The land of the camel*, 79, 80, 94, New York, Ronald Press, 1950. Rynhart, *op. cit.*, 127, 128.

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